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18 November 1966

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Communist China: Premier Chou En-lai and Li Fu-chun, leaders who have been identified with a relatively moderate line in Peking, appear to have gained political strength in recent days.

Economic planner Li Fu-chun--considered to be in Chou's camp--was described by Peking on 16 November as a member of the standing committee of the politburo, which normally has seven members. Li has ranked tenth in the politburo since the August reshuffle. He was listed in his usual position as recently as 12 November, at a turnout of leaders who attended a Sun Yat-sen centennial meeting. It is not clear whether the standing committee has been enlarged to include Li or whether he has displaced one of the former members, possibly General Secretary Teng Hsiao-ping, who has been in disfavor. Either action would enhance Premier Chou's position.

In late October and early November it appeared that a campaign was being organized against Chou En-lai and the government machinery he heads. During this period party journals were denouncing "fencesitters" and compromisers, "suggesting that the Mao-Lin forces were putting pressure on the Chou group to align itself more closely with the extremists.

No Red Guard attacks on government officials and ministries have been reported since about 8 November, however, and Chou has displayed signs of new political strength. At a 15 November meeting of "Red Guard long marchers," he was the senior party leader present and gave the only speech. An account of the meeting carried in the army journal and broadcast on 16 November, however, failed to mention Chou's role. This may indicate that Defense Minister Lin Piao is reluctant to have Chou's position enhanced.

[redacted] another mammoth rally for Red Guards--the last of the series--will be held during the next week. It may clarify what formal changes have been made in the politburo. [redacted]

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Ecuador: The constituent assembly's election of Otto Arosemena Gomez as provisional president is likely to ease the turbulent political situation only temporarily.

Arosemena's election is the result of a deal between his supporters and the conservative bloc of delegates led by former president Camilo Ponce.

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A political independent, Arosemena refers to his point-of-view as the "third position" between left and right. He is a cousin of former president Carlos Arosemena Monroy, who was ousted by the military in July 1963, but Otto does not have the pro-Castro sympathies of his cousin.

Next on the agenda for the assembly is the preparation of a new constitution, a task which will probably produce some political fireworks.

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NOTES

India: Y. B. Chavan, the newly appointed home minister whose predecessor was ousted after last week's violent riots in New Delhi, faces his first test today. Students, encouraged by Communists and other leftist groups, still plan to march on Parliament despite such government deterrent actions as the arrest of many students and some political leaders and a ban on demonstrations. Chavan has made clear he intends to maintain control.

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